



United States Embassy
Singapore

RELEASE

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**A MESSAGE FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY REGARDING THE PRE-TRAVEL
AUTHORIZATION PROGRAM FOR U.S.-BOUND TRAVELERS FROM VISA
WAIVER COUNTRIES**

The U.S. Embassy is pleased to announce that the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) program, an online system that is part of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), will be available effective immediately for applications through the ESTA Web site at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>. Beginning August 1, 2008, the ESTA program is available on a voluntary basis. We encourage all VWP travelers to make use of ESTA during the pilot program. ESTA will become mandatory for all VWP travelers as of January 12, 2009.

ESTA is an automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and whether such travel poses any law enforcement or security risk. In their ESTA applications, travelers must provide (in English) biographical data including name, birth date, and passport information, as well as travel information such as the flight number and destination address in the United States. Travelers will also be required to answer VWP eligibility questions regarding communicable diseases, arrests and convictions for certain crimes, and past history of visa revocation or deportation, among others. A third party, such as a relative or travel agent, will be permitted to submit an ESTA application on behalf of a VWP traveler. DHS will not initially collect a fee for ESTA applications.

As of January 12, 2009, all nationals or citizens of VWP countries who plan to travel to the United States for temporary business or pleasure under the VWP will need to receive an electronic travel authorization prior to boarding a U.S.-bound airplane or cruise ship. To apply for authorization to travel to the United States under the VWP, travelers will log on to the ESTA web-based system and complete an application online providing the biographical and eligibility information currently required on the paper I-94W form. Until ESTA is mandatory for all VWP travelers, however, ESTA applicants will also still need to complete an I-94W form en-route, for presentation at a U.S. port of entry. ESTA will be implemented as a mandatory program on January 12, 2009.

ESTA will determine, almost immediately in many cases, if an individual is eligible for VWP travel, and if such travel poses any law enforcement or security risks. ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel, and once approved, will be valid for up to two years or until the applicant's passport expires, whichever comes first. Authorizations will also be valid for multiple entries into the United States. To facilitate the authorization process, DHS recommends

that ESTA applications be submitted as soon as an applicant begins planning U.S.-bound travel, and not less than 72 hours prior to travel.

In rare cases, an ESTA application may be denied. In the event that an ESTA application is denied, the ESTA website will provide a link to the DHS Travel Redress Inquiry Program (TRIP) website. A request for redress may be directed to DHS through the TRIP website. A traveler may also reapply for an ESTA after a period of ten days. If the ESTA is still not approved, the traveler will be required to apply for a nonimmigrant visa at the U.S. Embassy. For more information about visa application procedures, please visit <http://singapore.usembassy.gov>.

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